

The
Challenge of Bolshevism
A NEW SOCIAL IDEAL

By
D. F. BUXTON

BVCL 03097



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TO THE NAMELESS HOST WHO, UNDER
THE TSARS, PERISHED AS MARTYRS TO
THEIR IDEALS OF JUSTICE AND FREEDOM

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Data Entered

29 APR 2003

LONDON  
GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD  
MUSEUM STREET

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
UNWIN BROTHERS LTD., WOKING  
FIRST PUBLISHED JULY 1928  
SECOND EDITION DECEMBER 1928

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# The Challenge of Bolshevism

## *A NEW SOCIAL IDEAL*

AFTER a recent visit of twenty-four days to Russia, spent in Moscow and Leningrad, two provincial towns, and a country village, I asked myself what was the dominating impression that I carried away. Readers may be surprised, and some of them may be scandalized, to hear that I came to the conclusion that what impressed me most in Russia was a sense of the moral advance represented in the new order of society which the Communists are trying to establish.

This advance is to be felt in the new ideal that has been adopted for society and which is being inculcated through every possible means of propaganda and of education. It is an ideal radically different from our own. Whether we approve of it or not, it certainly behoves us to try to understand it.

Russia has a population of 140 millions. European Russia alone covers an area sixteen times that of the British Isles, and the whole U.S.S.R. one-seventh of the land surface of the globe. At the present rate of

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progress it will not be many years before every child born in this vast expanse will have passed through the Soviet schools. Even if for many years to come a certain proportion escape the schooling, they cannot, in any case, escape the Communist education. Society has already been largely remodelled, and in itself supplies the training-ground where men's minds are turned to the new ideal.

What, then, is this new ideal towards which Communism is working? The Bolsheviks call it a 'proletarian' ideal, and contrast it constantly with our 'bourgeois' ideal. Their ultimate ideal, as we all know, or ought to know, is a 'genuine' democracy (in contrast to what they regard as our 'sham' democracies), where such a thing as class founded on differences of wealth shall be no more. The wealth produced by society as a whole is to be at the disposal of society as a unit. All individuals shall receive according to their needs, and all shall give according to their powers; there shall be an equality of opportunity, both of opportunity to serve (which implies equal opportunities of education) and of opportunities to enjoy, i.e., as equal as possible a distribution of wealth. This ideal, of course, is not peculiar to Russian Communism; it finds acceptance among many who are not conscious followers of Karl Marx, its great exponent. As an ultimate ideal few would quarrel with it, so long, at any rate, as no serious steps were taken to hasten its advent.

## NEW GOALS BUT OLD METHODS

Outside Russia, however, this ideal for society receives little serious attention. This is partly because to the vast majority of people, if they ever hear of it at all, it appears merely visionary. (I will recur to the question whether it really is so visionary as most of us are inclined to think.) The second and more important reason, however, why the Russian Communists' ideals receive so little serious consideration outside their own country is that the attention of mankind is riveted on the criminal nature, as it is made to appear, of the *means* which the Russian Communists adopt in pursuit of their ends. The British public is accustomed to associate their methods with wholesale robbery and murder, persecution of the middle class, disappearance of political freedom, and continued spying and plotting outside their own country. Attention is focused on what seem to us these moral outrages.

## NEW GOALS BUT OLD METHODS

Before going further, I would like, therefore, to discuss whether it is not a mistake that the really great interest and importance of the *objective* which the Russian Communists have in view should be overlooked, while attention is focused on the defects of the *means*? The errors and crimes which occupy the attention of the public are in any case exagger-

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ated, but granted there are many of them, why do we never stop to consider how far they are incidental to *any* minority rule based on force, wherever it occurs? Russia is not the only country in Europe where many of the methods we denounce when used by Bolsheviks are in full swing. There is no general outcry when acts of political tyranny or terrorism occur under Mussolini, nor under the Fascist Governments of Hungary or Roumania. Most of these pass unnoticed, while every possible story in the count against the Bolsheviks is featured throughout the Press. Moreover, have we forgotten that in Russia itself the horrors of arrest on suspicion, of indefinite imprisonment without adequate trial, of political executions, persecutions, the absence of free speech, etc., are no new thing? It seems almost insulting to public intelligence to remind readers of the terrorism employed under the despotism of the Tsars, for it is such an ABC fact of European history. A vast population of peasants and workers for generations suffered indescribably under the oppression of a bureaucracy and the landlord class. When a portion of the intelligentsia at the end of last century took up the people's cause, they, too, were subjected to a terrorism which no extreme of Bolshevik methods could ever surpass. One reads of whole families decimated—some members executed, some in Siberia, some gone mad from their sufferings, and all as a consequence of what might

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be described as a mild Liberalism in their opinions.<sup>1</sup>

The suppression of the Rebellion of 1905-6 (provoked by the failure of the Tsar to fulfil the promises of freedom contained in his 'October Manifesto') is a record of atrocities such as the Communists' worst enemies would never think of attributing to them: executions on an immense scale, hanging, flogging (in some cases even to death), boys and even girls of fifteen years old being stripped naked for the purpose. Prince Kropotkin published gruesome evidence<sup>2</sup> as to this "return to the horrors of the Dark Ages"—"a picture so terrible as almost to shake one's faith in human progress." And this was less than twenty years ago! In Moscow alone there were reckoned to be more than 60,000 people in prison in the spring of 1906, and during one month at St. Petersburg 1,400 persons were executed under martial law. How did England and France express their horror of tyranny in those days? The Tsar had greatly added to his debts by the expenses of massacring and imprisoning large sections of his subjects, and France and England responded readily to his application for a loan to help him out of these

<sup>1</sup> Mackenzie Wallace, in his *Russia* (1912), quotes an "apparently trustworthy source" that in 1903 no less than "4,867 persons were condemned to imprisonment, or exile without any regular trial."

<sup>2</sup> Kropotkin's book, *The Terror in Russia*, published in 1909, ran through eight editions in two years. See also H. W. Nevinson's *The Dawn in Russia*.

## THE CHALLENGE OF BOLSHEVISM

difficulties. And it was not only in times of disturbance but in times of 'peace' that the Government and its representatives relied upon ruthless methods. In the early years of our present century peasants who defaulted in the payment of taxes were still liable to be strapped face downwards to a board and flogged. Cossacks were armed with 'knouts' (whips with leather thongs and veritable instruments of torture), and used them freely, for instance, to disperse what they regarded as undesirable gatherings in the streets, or to drive back strikers into the factories. The very word 'Cossack' inspired terror. Now the knout remains to be inspected in Museums of the Revolution, along with the iron manacles for the ankles and wrists, the models of pitch-dark cells for solitary confinement, and such-like records of the means by which the predecessors of the Bolsheviks sought to establish what represented itself to most of them, no doubt, as the true 'welfare of the people.'

There must be many people still in the prime of life in Russia to-day to whom such things are an all too vivid memory. It would be strange indeed if their zeal for the new society had not been quickened by memory of this still living past. It would also be strange if long subjection to brutality had proved to be an education in methods of gentleness and mercy.

There has really been no 'spontaneous generation' of a sort of political monster in Russia to-day. What

## NEW GOALS BUT OLD METHODS

we see there both for good and evil is born out of the past, and it is quite easy to trace the generation. But it is only fair to remember that all the victims of 'Red Terrorism' in the last ten years are still a mere handful compared to the total of victims under the Tsars. At one time during the last century the yearly average of exiles (mainly political) to Siberia was 18,000. "In 1909 the number of exiles for political reasons from Russia was reckoned at 180,000."<sup>1</sup>

Why does our Press, why do our 'educated' classes in general, ignore Russia's terrible past when they express their outraged moral sense so freely as regards the present? Why, too, are we so blind as to our own share in this past, out of which Russia's present has been born? There was no general protest in our country, or other countries, as to what went on under the Tsars—no general outcry in the Press as we have now. On the contrary, the Tsar was received by our Court and an Entente actually entered into with the late Tsar by Edward VII and his Government. The upholders of the Tsarist régime were accepted by our 'respectable' society. It was only an uninfluential minority in our country who in those days took up the cause of the oppressed. Is it surprising that we succeed in convincing the Bolsheviks that what rouses the

<sup>1</sup> See article on "Russia" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and the article on "Exiles."

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indignation of the bourgeoisie are not tyrannical or terroristic acts in themselves, but those acts when directed against a particular class, i.e., the bourgeois class, and that what really excites us is not the cause of liberty, nor of religion, nor the other things we talk so freely about, but the ultimate menace to our own property which we recognize in Communist ideas? It is part of the Communist indictment of 'bourgeois' civilization that it tends to produce this sort of self-deception and intellectual dishonesty. It is a horrid accusation, and I fear in the last few years we have done a good deal to justify it.

### *THE REAL CRITERIA*

Before we pass judgment upon Communism, there are, then, three points which I think we should be careful to study. First, how the Communist methods of violence compare with those of their predecessors, i.e., what was the standard in this respect to which they were heirs? Secondly, whether the sum of human good is less or greater under the Communist despotism than under the despotism of their predecessors. Thirdly, whether it is less or greater, or promises to be less or greater, than under our Western régime.

As regards the first point, the answer is incontrovertible, and I have already referred to it. It need

## THE REAL CRITERIA

only be added that the Tsar and his order, of course, claimed to be the guardians of the people's interests, and justified methods of terrorism (if these were ever called in question) as a necessary means to the good end which they held in view. In this standpoint, that political means, whatever they may be, are justified by the ends, i.e., the good of the State, there is probably unanimity between Communists and Tsars, and Mussolini and most of the world's great politicians, and the vast majority of newspaper writers (at least when the doings of their own Party are concerned) in times of national crisis. In times past, this justification as regards Russia (if it was ever called for) found acceptance by the mass of educated people outside that country—the same people who now reject it when used by Bolsheviks and condemn the latter unsparingly.

Before going further, I will mention that as regards the use of force, I myself take the standpoint of the Society of Friends, being convinced that violence generates violence, the evil crop tending constantly to perpetuate itself. The experience of Russia with Communist Terrorism following close on Tsarist Terrorism is just what one would have expected. But how curiously distorted is the vision which sees only this ugly aspect of Communism, an aspect which it shares with other political organizations, and fails to appreciate all that is good: a good that is relatively novel to the rest of the world! What,

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then, do we really mean by Communism or Bolshevism? In his little book contributed to the Home University Library, Mr. Laski defines Communism as "in our own day, at once an ideal and a method. As an ideal, it aims at a society in which classes have been abolished as a result of the common ownership of the means of production and distribution." As a method, it believes in revolution. In the working out of its ideal, as defined above, some novelty may be claimed for Communist Russia, but for its methods of violence none at all. [N.B. In Russian, the word Bolshevik means 'majority,' and became attached almost accidentally to the Communist Party; in our language the word seems on its way to becoming a mere term of vulgar abuse. I will therefore give preference to the term Communism.]

### *'TYRANNY' OLD AND NEW*

This brings me to my second question: Is the well-being of the Russian people, taking into account both material and moral conditions, greater or less than it used to be? That is, after all, the crucial question. For most of us, this question on the comparative well-being of the people is already answered when we become clear about the answer to the first, i.e., the comparative harshness of the Governments past and present. Those in doubt

## 'TYRANNY' OLD AND NEW

about it must surely forget to what an extent the daily life of the people was overshadowed under the Tsarist régime; to what a degree not only the Government and all its representatives, but the landlords and employers, relied upon brutal and degrading methods of compulsion. To these I have already referred. And nowadays does anyone believe that to live in dread is a good popular education? In Russia, the Communist 'tyranny,' though we admit the term, *has* released the mass of peasants and workers from dread. It is a strictly *political* tyranny which does not affect the working conditions of daily life nor the management of a very great deal in *local* affairs. It rigs the more important elections and suppresses opposition candidates, and on those few Socialists whose dissent from Communist methods is regarded as dangerous, it comes down with as much harshness as on the recalcitrant bourgeois. But as regards new possibilities of freedom for the people, including the formerly 'subject' Nationalities, there can be no shadow of doubt. One has only to think of the royal road to emancipation, freely opened up by the Communists, in the great new opportunities for education offered to both old and young. (But, of course, these opportunities are not very widely appreciated by the *present* generation of illiterate peasants.)

The tragedy for the middle class is, of course, overwhelming. But they were a tiny minority, and for

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those who have chosen not to desert their country, the tragedy is not wholly unredeemed. (Whether the dispossession of the middle class constitutes such a crime that the whole course of subsequent history must be vitiated by it we will discuss later.)

### *THE RELATIVE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE*

As regards material conditions for the masses, I think it can no longer be contested that throughout the ten years of the Communist experiment steady progress has been made, and that the outlook is at any rate hopeful. The peasants are at last in actual, if not nominal, possession of the land, and this age-long desire of their hearts is fulfilled. It is true that the peasants are not so contented as the town-workers, especially in those areas (admittedly large, but constantly decreasing) where agricultural reforms have not yet penetrated. Where they have, their success is clearly demonstrated by increased prosperity. The town-workers have far shorter hours, women's wages are far higher, men's wages in some cases already higher, in others lower than before the Revolution; but loss in this respect is partly set off by numerous advantages gained under the Social Insurance system. (Of these, unemployment benefit, holidays with pay, 'rest homes' and free medical treatment are among the chief.)

## THE RELATIVE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE

But the well-being of the people is not to be judged by their material conditions only, nor by their escape from a régime where "civic freedom is confined to the hangman alone" (Deputy Tcheidze in Duma, March 1909, quoted by Kropotkin). If for other reasons their morale is being lowered we should still have to condemn their new social order. We reach, then, the larger question of the moral education which goes on under one social system and another. In Western Europe, however flagrant the evils in our social order, we seem deeply convinced as to the superiority of our moral standards over those of the Communists. But are we justified in this conviction of superiority? Like most other people, I assumed it before I went to Russia, but I feel far less confident now. I wish the inhabitants of Mars could appoint a Commission of Inquiry into this question! In such a matter our powers of judgment, our sense of right and wrong, are themselves so much the product of the thing that we are judging that it would need a visitor from another planet to be truly dispassionate. Our social ideals and the social organization that reflects them have been at work upon our minds and consciences from infancy; they hold us in a grip which is none the less of iron because we are so little aware of it. It was not till I visited Russia and found a different ideal of society dominating men's minds and a correspondingly different organization of society in progress of establishment, that I began to become

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really self-conscious as regards these phenomena in  
my own country.

### *OUR WORSHIP OF WEALTH*

Let us briefly examine the differences in question. In Western 'civilization' the order of society we accept is one divided into classes based on the holding of property; generally speaking, the holding of as much property as possible is the accepted ideal towards which the desires and efforts of individuals are directed. A usual habit of middle-class persons is to choose the highest standard of life of which income appears to admit, and then for the rest of life pity themselves as 'poor' people without any margin, exposed by an unjust income tax to cruel financial vicissitudes. The mass of men and women work primarily for themselves and their families, save for them, resist increases of income tax and death duties, in order that the family may attain to, and preserve, as high a social standing as possible. A small minority do, of course, think it right to work for the more equal distribution of wealth, a still smaller minority of 'advanced' Socialists would like to see this effected relatively rapidly. But the great majority of people still accept our order of society with its great disparities of wealth and position, as they accept the weather, and are not

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ashamed to pray for sunshine on their particular path.

The Communists are so far right that our national ideal is a 'bourgeois' ideal, i.e., a glorification of the habits of life worked out by a moneyed 'upper' class, or the 'middle class,' as we have now become more accustomed to call it. This class, with its traditions of luxury and display, has created a standard of life the influence of which permeates the minds of the whole of society. Even the minds of many so-called 'Socialists' do not escape; in life's daily practices they accept 90 per cent. of the capitalist's outlook. So it is that the small bourgeoisie, in general, do not condemn the luxurious lives of the aristocracy. On the other hand, they bathe in Court news and feed their souls on the doings of the titled and great. The same god of wealth that is worshipped in one section is equally worshipped in the other. Men's eyes are not, apparently, opened to the selfishness of luxury by the fact that they themselves may be entirely cut off from it. Among the poorer classes there are surprisingly few critics of the wealthy. Most people who are not wealthy are honest enough to know that they would spend their money in just the same sort of way as the rich people if they had the chance. To take a trivial example: if a working-man does not wear a bowler hat, a black coat, and a stiff collar on Sunday, it is *not* because such a dress is unpractical and wasteful,

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still less because it is hopelessly unbeautiful. It is only poverty that draws the line, and so soon as income admits of it the standards of the bourgeois are adopted, essentially because of the social standing which they carry.

### *COMMUNIST CRITICISM OF 'BOURGEOIS' IDEALS*

The Communists make the accusation against us that our forms of education make people dissatisfied with manual labour and glorify the 'bourgeois' ideal. The working-man who passes through a University, equally with the working-man who gets money, ceases, as soon as possible, to be a working-man. It must be admitted that a 'rise in life' does mean, as a matter of course, the adoption of bourgeois habits. It is, in fact, natural and inevitable that the working-man, or relatively poor man, who achieves getting a middle-class income, does not like to feel himself 'out of it' with that class. The conviction that he and his family are 'as good' as anyone else expresses itself in the desire to have all the same things which the middle class accept as belonging to their social status. The lamentable thing is that the instinct for equality, sound in itself, should find expression in ideas which are purely materialistic. It is, at least, a sign of advance that we have begun to feel uncomfortable in talking about 'upper' and

## CRITICISM OF 'BOURGEOIS' IDEALS

'lower' classes. Nevertheless, in practice, the 'upper' does still represent in the minds of the vast majority of people just what it expresses—a position to be aspired to. To adopt the usages of this class so as to be received within it, so soon as income permits, and to be afraid of deviating from these usages even when one's position is established, is practically universal. Like the force of gravitation, the pressure of public opinion is constantly and powerfully and yet unnoticeably at work upon one's habits, upon one's point of view, above all upon one's standard of values—a constant drag towards materialism. It is wealth which commands the most universal respect; think of the difference in the standard of good manners towards the rich and towards 'the poor'? *In itself* wealth gives social standing and powers of influence independently of the many means of influence—such as the control of the Press—for which it pays cash. There are, of course, many stages in the social pyramid, and the social code of the public-school man includes customs and privileges which are not quite the same for the yet larger middle class that for the most part can never aspire to his distinction and importance. But the ideal, the objective, is essentially the same, and the important thing about it is that it is *self-regarding*. It means spending vast sums of money on oneself as soon as one gets the chance. So soon as one acquires the money it is spent on a larger house, more

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servants, luxurious entertaining (of those who are as little in need of good food and of amusement as oneself), luxurious travelling, a handsome car, a particular type of dress, the one peculiar merit of which is that it stamps the wearer as the possessor of wealth, thereby establishing his or her claim to deference and honour. Men and women base their conduct on the 'done' thing, i.e., they accept a standard not for its intrinsic value judged by a code of Christian ethics, or any other worthy of the name, but as a ticket of membership for the class they belong to or aspire to.

### *OUR GOD OF FASHION*

Take, for example, the place we accord to fashion in dress. It is an absolute tyranny in our Western civilization. It causes universal waste of money and universal waste of energy and of time. At the bottom of this waste is a worse evil—the constant deferring in our minds to what might best be described as a *false god*; a despot who causes one to judge matters not according to their inherent good or evil, but according as they come under his quite arbitrary ban or blessing. We all bow down to this false god, and constantly allow his fictitious standard of good and evil to obliterate the realities for us. What 'lady' would venture to walk down Regent Street

## OUR GOD OF FASHION

in an overall, or what 'gentleman' would go about London in his shirt-sleeves, no matter how great the heat of the day? Think of the heart-searchings it would cause any of us to accept an invitation to dinner on the part of any 'society' person, if we did not possess an evening dress! (I recently heard of a 'high-class' but impecunious visitor from Russia who was put to great inconvenience, and a good deal of mental distress, by our absurd standards in this respect.) It seems to us lacking in 'respect' to those who entertain us to appear in their homes dressed below a certain standard of expense and of fashion; lacking in respect to the public in general, or, stranger still, lacking in *self-respect*, to appear in public meanly clothed; strangest of all, lacking in respect for the Almighty to attend Divine Worship in shabby clothes. In our churches, those who *are* perforce shabbily dressed feel it proper to keep in the background if they come at all. There are hundreds of similar facts—too obvious and familiar in the ordinary course to arrest attention. But since I have travelled in Russia they have acquired a new interest for me. I ask myself: Why do we take such facts as a matter of course? What does it signify? Why do we take trivialities so seriously? How is it that it would take a real effort of will on my part to be seen washing my own doorstep?

Our moneyed classes carry on perpetual propaganda for this perverted social ideal, for their lives

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are set in the limelight and serve as a colossal advertisement for selfishness and materialism. The advertisement is so successful that there seems to the mass of men nothing peculiar, nothing wrong, nor inconsistent even with their Christian professions, in the principle of getting as much as they can and spending it for the pleasure or the dignity of themselves and their families. Our society, indeed, might be regarded as a gigantic *conspiracy of selfishness*. We give lip-service to the virtue of unselfishness, but in practice a real unselfishness is the last thing desired, as its standards would be totally destructive of those by which we live. The Communists' saying that "religion is opium for the people" has its application for us. It is quite easy to enjoy selfish privileges and to enjoy the sense of being unselfish at the same time. It is quite usual to cling with reverence to Christian professions and at the same time to support actually or tacitly, by means of one's vote and by conforming to class usages, a state of society which obstructs on all sides the practice of Christianity.

## THE CONTRAST OF THE 'PROLETARIAN' IDEAL

From the point of view of *morals*, there seems, indeed, little to be said for our Western social ideals. And yet we are so satisfied with ourselves that we do not even take the trouble to find out what it is

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that the Bolsheviks criticize in us, and what it is they really want to do. Now in Russia we may study a country where for ten years prodigious efforts have been directed to the working out of a quite different social ideal—the 'proletarian' ideal, to which we referred at the beginning of this treatise. In contrast to the strictly self-regarding ideal of our 'bourgeois' civilizations, the proletarian ideal exalts the Community as a whole, and therefore also the labour and the abstinence on the part of individuals on which the welfare of the Community must ultimately rest. All possible stress is laid on the *dignity of labour* rather than on the dignity of possession. The Communists do not exalt those who heap up wealth. He who 'strikes oil' will never be rewarded by a peerage, but by the loss of his civic rights. It is not those who *gain* but those who *give* who receive honour. Every manual worker, from the charwoman upward, who gives his or her humble best is to be treated with as much respect as the skilled brain-worker. It is no doubt right that talent and skill in any occupation *should* be honoured, and so it always will be; but it is also right, and this we Westerners have overlooked, that the *will* to give should be recognized as even more worthy of honour than the power to give. In the emphasis they place on the spirit of service, the Communists have taken to heart some of the most important maxims of the New Testament, clothed them in a fresh garb, which

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renders them, apparently, unrecognizable to us; associated them with the Red Flag and the name of Lenin; and when all this is accompanied by wordy denunciation of all 'religion,' the deception for us is complete. (It is curious that almost the only point on which we are prepared to believe exactly what the Communists say is just the one which is entirely untrue, i.e., as regards their own essential 'irreligiousness'!) In their social ideal there is no doubt that the Communists have introduced ethics where we have been content with snobbery.

We may ask, however, what is the sense, more exactly, in which men *can* be regarded as 'equal'? In the Communist ideal all men and women are to be equal in the sense that (1) they will be treated with equal respect; (2) have equal opportunities of education; (3) be under an equal obligation to work for the Community; (4) have an equal claim on all the essentials of life; (5) have an equal voice in the management of the affairs of the Community.

#### *THE ABOLITION OF CLASS DISTINCTIONS*

The progress made in the direction of this ideal is already most conspicuous. As regards the respect with which people treat each other, this is already far more equalized than in any other country in which I have travelled. In fact, one of the most

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forcible impressions I carried away from Russia was that of the odium attaching to the whole idea of class; and it was a novel and most interesting experience to be in a country where, outwardly at any rate, the division of classes had ceased to be a noticeable feature. One noticed it particularly in the manners of the people. These were distinctly good, for the people are genuinely friendly and obliging, but one must not expect anywhere to be met as anything but an equal. The fact that one was a foreigner, and a representative of a country which is universally believed to be planning war against Russia, evoked no rudeness, but neither did the power of the presumably wealthy visitor's purse produce any of the usual deference. Of all flunkeys and flunkeyism there was a complete and (to my mind) blessed absence. There was, in fact, *one* standard of manners, not several.

In my own country I have long tried to have one standard of manners for all alike, but our society is still such a sadly long way from co-operating! When I answer the door-bell, I still find myself wondering whether the well-appointed youth is some forgotten 'acquaintance' from a 'superior' circle or 'only' the grocer's representative; in other words, whether I am to wring him by the hand, or barely to recognize his presence! In Russia people are all 'comrades' to each other, and the social atmosphere seemed to me far more wholesome where it was the

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natural thing to treat others, and to be treated, as nothing more, nor less, than equals.

There were, indeed, few remaining evidences of 'upper class' life. The houses of the great were still standing, but one knew that in the towns the former owners (where they remain) now share the available house-room on an equal footing with the rest of the population. In the country great numbers of the large houses have been converted into 'Rest Homes' for the workers, Schools, Museums, and other institutions in the public service. 'Smartness,' whether in the externals of dwelling-houses, in dress, in servants, had disappeared. There were few private cars on the streets, none were 'smart,' and the chauffeur, if any, was indistinguishable from his employer. After a day or two in Russia it came to me with a shock of real relief that one of the most important tin gods to whom in Western countries we pay our daily homage had been cast out of the temple—the god of fashion, whom to offend even in a slight degree endangers one's position in society.

In Russia, with the disappearance of the upper class, the foibles of fashion have disappeared too. The only class that remains is the one great class of 'the People.' Thus the Russian people are free to wear what they please. In Moscow one could wear long skirts or short, narrow skirts or voluminous, and nobody looked twice. Of 'bourgeois' dress, as we should know it here, there was very little to be seen

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in Moscow, or in any of the other towns we visited. In the busiest streets of Moscow, in a twenty minutes' walk one morning I counted how many women were about as well dressed as myself (and my standards are usually considered low); I met only three. The class distinction of hats has almost disappeared (a handkerchief over the head is the usual thing), and I began to realize what a grotesque and clumsy device a hat is. During the whole of my visit I never saw anyone, except foreigners, wearing gloves. Dress, in fact, is primarily for *use*, which brought me to realize how very largely ours is for display, and therefore what a vast waste of time, of thought, and of money it habitually represents.

#### *THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR AND OF SERVICE*

It may, of course, be said that the absence of fashions in Russia is simply a result of universal poverty, and that, with a rise in the standard of living, they would soon assume their sway. But I do not think this can occur so long as the present propaganda is kept up for the proletarian ideal of service to the Community. This ideal, while it exalts the dignity of labour, holds up to scorn and loathing the whole idea of what we are accustomed to call an 'upper' class. On the innumerable posters by which the Communists carry on universal propaganda for

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their social ideal, the distinctive middle-class dress becomes associated in the popular mind with greed, materialism, idleness, social parasitism. (We will refer later to the economics underlying this idea of 'parasitism.') But, in any case, the private control of wealth is associated with the cruel régime of the past. No one takes off his hat to the capitalist. He is looked at askance—as socially an evil, politically a danger. Bourgeois dress, in particular the black coat and top-hat, has become a very symbol for the social evils which are supposed to characterize a 'bourgeois' society, while the simple working-man in his open shirt, with sleeves rolled up to show his brawny arms, is represented as the pillar of society. He stands as the symbol of honest toil in the service of all. The idea of the dignity of labour, and with it of the beauty of simplicity, is inculcated at every turn. Even on postage-stamps and coins the eye is arrested by a simple representation of the rugged figure of a Son of Toil; and the Communist emblem of the hammer and sickle seems exactly the right thing.

As regards education, it is not my object in this treatise to describe the details of Communist institutions, as these can so easily be studied elsewhere. Suffice it to say that education is designed to give equal chances of self-development and of service to every child. In the school curricula the training for service to the community, from the practice of

## A NEW STANDARD OF VALUES

hygiene to the understanding of the organization of government, is being worked out as thoroughly as possible.

Already it can be said that the circumstances of birth are absolutely no barrier to important careers. To be able to say this is to point to something epoch-making in the history of the world. *Why* is our public incomparably more interested in the matter of "What has become of the Russian Crown jewels?" The answer to that question is the subject of this treatise; the explanation lies in the different standards of value evolved by the one civilization and the other.

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This difference is reflected, for instance, in the far greater importance which in the Communist civilization is attached to child life and to the institutions which have to do with it; in the magnificent programme of education, including that of adults; in the universal thirst for education and the interest in serious subjects on the part of the people themselves.

As an index to the public mind, it is instructive to compare the bookstalls in Russia with our own. On our bookstalls there may be a few papers, magazines, and books of a 'serious' character, but their position well in the background certainly suggests that it

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does not pay to give them prominence. In the 'proletarian' atmosphere of Russia it is the natural and not the unnatural thing to have 'serious' interests, to talk freely about them and to work hard in their pursuit. I found it a real relief to scan their bookshops and the numerous bookstalls in the shabby streets. There were no lurid covers to catch the eye, no sensational pictures of young men and women. For the one eternal theme of our 'reading' public there must be relatively little demand. The books and papers, like the streets, presented a dingy appearance; smartness has gone, but simplicity and seriousness take its place. The really 'popular' subjects appear to be economics, politics, history, philosophy, science, engineering, and the like.

In Russia at the present time one can, indeed, see a standard of values indicated on all hands quite different from that which our own country has accustomised us to.

Nevertheless, in spite of the relatively generous expenditure on education, the Communist programme has been delayed by a lack of funds. The Communists have, indeed, been forced to recognize that their objectives cannot be realized as quickly as originally hoped. As regards, for instance, the greater equalization of the means of living, progress, although very marked, is slowed down by compromises. It has been found necessary to give high salaries in order to re-acquire the services of

**HOW WE CRUSH THE POWER OF SYMPATHY**

competent managers of industry; and in other skilled professions high salaries are likewise regarded as a temporary necessity until a generation has been trained in the 'proletarian' ideal. But the *bona fides* of the Communist condemnation of the 'bourgeois' standard is attested by the self-denying ordinance which forbids any member of the Communist Party to accept a salary of more than 225 roubles a month (about £270 a year). One finds this giving rise to the phenomenal situation of, e.g., a bank manager, who is a Communist, receiving a smaller salary than his junior who is *not* a Communist. This fact, again, is an example of one of the points in the Bolshevik régime which is seldom mentioned in our country. And yet it also is surely of the highest significance. Contrast the lives of these men at £270 a year with those of our governing classes! What idealists the wicked Communists must be in comparison! So long as a State has people at its head who are prepared to make such sacrifices in the public attestation of vital principles, they are at any rate sowing much good seed, and it will take much simultaneous sowing of bad seed to choke it.

***HOW WE CRUSH THE POWER OF SYMPATHY***

As an education in morals there seems to me to be no comparison between the 'bourgeois' and the

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'proletarian' ideal of civilization. Thus, in theory, as Christians, we attach great importance to *sympathy* (as an essential element in the higher forms of love). But in practice we set little store by it. It is often asked: "How is it that when people rise from a humble origin in life they so seldom retain sympathy for the class they leave behind?" The answer surely is: "Because they enter a society which has no use for the virtue of sympathy." The middle classes, by their whole standard of life, disavow sympathy for the worker, and the worker who is admitted through the sacred portals of the temple of wealth must disavow it too. He may do it lip-service, but he must join with his new class in doing everything to preserve a form of society which renders the exercise of sympathy, and therefore of real love, as difficult as possible.

Life in privileged surroundings inevitably debars one from any real understanding of life without these privileges. How can sympathy develop for all the experiences of hardship and insecurity, which are the daily lot of multitudes, or of monotony and limitation of every kind from which a perhaps larger multitude never escape? From such experiences wealth daily buys one exemption.

It is only for the few that sympathy, or the vivid and actively exploring imagination on which it is based, amounts to an inborn genius, and our social system breeds vast classes of people who can never

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do justice to their natural human powers—such as they are—of sympathy and love. Our feelings become canalized along the narrow channels worn by our own experiences. The youth produced by public school and university have their minds obsessed by a distorted vision of the world, and their feelings correspond to this wrong mental perspective. On their mental stage the big things are seen small and the small things are seen big: trivialities occupy the chief places. It is tragic to think of all the children naturally kindly, but for whom the society into which they are born forbids the best fruition of their highest gifts. They are nurtured in the selfish individualism of middle-class ideals which regard wealth as a matter of course to be spent primarily on oneself; on a big house regardless of overcrowding elsewhere; luxurious food regardless of hunger elsewhere; superfluous clothes regardless of those who perish of cold: public school education (at a cost which would pay for twenty boys at a secondary school) regardless of the fact that the traditions and public opinion of our public schools at many points present a *sort of caricature of what is* artificial and frivolous in the middle-class standpoint. It is only in an essentially soft life that men can afford to devote themselves to trivialities and to encourage their sons and daughters to do so.

*THE MORAL OF OUR OWN PAST*

It is easier to understand the nature of the barrier which the class system can oppose to the spread of just and humane ideas if one views the circumstances first at a little distance and examines the present in the light of the past. One should read, for instance, about the conditions of Labour, and middle-class opinion on the subject, during the period of the Industrial Revolution. A most vivid picture is given in the books of Mr. and Mrs. Hammond: *The Village Labourer*, *The Town Labourer* (covering the period 1760-1832), and *The Skilled Labourer*. The new system had brought undreamed-of possibilities of heaping up wealth, but it was built on a ghastly exploitation of human lives. It was accepted, for instance, as the ordinary thing for the children of the poor to begin work at five or six years of age, to slave for fifteen hours in the depths of a mine or in the heat and dust of a cotton mill, in terror of the lash, or of the iron stick used by the overseers. It took forty years to overcome the strenuous opposition of employers and of the middle classes generally to get the worst of these evils a little abated.

No work was too hard, no hours too long, no wages too mean, no conditions of life too degraded so long as the human instruments of wealth could

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go on functioning. The economic science of the time was called in to prove that any mitigation of the workers' lot, even that of the children, would destroy profits, drive trade out of the country, and finally be the ruin of the workers themselves. Religion was called in to sanction all inequalities, to prove that poverty facilitated salvation, to exalt one set of virtues for the rich and an opposite set, resignation, humility, industry, abstinence, for the poor. In fact, "the upper classes allowed no values to the work-people but those which the slave-owner appreciates in the slave."

The misery of the workers prepared a soil which the ruling classes feared would be fertile forcing-ground for the ideas of the French Revolution. Every human feeling, therefore, was sacrificed, first to the production of wealth, and then to the protection of it; the legislation of those days, in fact, embodied the conviction that "any hardships inflicted upon the working classes . . . should not weigh against the supreme importance of protecting property." As a result of the fear of Revolution "a permanent state of siege was the vision of English Society" that inspired English rulers, who regarded the defence of property as the supreme duty of the State, and to attain that end any means were regarded as justified: terrorism, even to the hanging of women, the leaving of people in prison even for years without trial, the suppression of all liberty of discussion and

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association, all power of appeal, all opportunity of education.

Side by side with the pitiless oppression of the workers and their dreadful degradation, the propertied classes carried on such lives as one sees vividly depicted in the novels of Jane Austen, a minute cult of trivialities in their cosy and carefully curtained-off corners of the world.

### *THE PROSTITUTION OF SCIENCE AND OF RELIGION*

Looking back, we are startled and horrified at the cruelties which our forbears either ignored or accepted, and at the doctrines by which they justified them. We can trace exactly the points at which economics were perverted by them, and exactly the points at which Christianity was perverted by them so as to secure the support of such authorities for their own privileged position. This was not done consciously, but the mind fastened on such facts (as it always does), or such interpretations of them, as seemed to give countenance to their real love—the love of property and position.

But we cannot for these reasons disown our ancestry nor forget that our forbears of a century ago in *private* life were just like ourselves. They had at least just the same strength of affections, of

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sympathy with each other, the same ideals of 'good will' and unselfishness within the circle of their own class. In the narrowness of their sympathies they showed themselves the victims of the class system. And so do we.

It is only now that the middle classes are *beginning* not only to admit with their minds, but really to *feel* (and that is a very different thing), that the workers are 'human beings' in the same sense of the words as they themselves. But the process is strangely gradual. Little over a century ago the very idea even of 'citizenship' for the workers, associated as it was with the French Revolution, was regarded as a challenge to religion and to civilization. As to the idea of 'Brotherhood,' that could be admitted only in such a strangely sublimated sense of that term as to have little meaning so far as the affairs of *this* world (as contrasted with the next) were concerned. Now at least we do recognize a 'citizen' in every compatriot. Is he also a 'brother' to us? Not yet, I think, but perhaps a troublesome 'poor relation' whom our own self-respect for a long time has urged us to be kind to, but who shows a tiresome discontent with his humble abode, and who is now actually beginning to raise doubts as to the legality of the distribution of family property!

It might have been expected, as Mr. and Mrs. Hammond point out, that during the period of the Industrial Revolution religion would have played a

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part in checking the materialist spirit that regarded the "poor man only as an instrument of wealth," "by insisting on the conception of man as an end in himself, and refusing to surrender that revelation to any science of politics or any law of trade." Such a conception was, indeed, "the spiritual message of the French Revolution." In our country it seems that it has taken well over a century for such an idea to be recognized by any considerable number of people as pertaining to religion at all, and those who accord it a place, where it rightfully belongs, in the very heart of Christianity, are very often not professing Christians at all. The spiritual message of the French Revolution has now been revived by the Communists.

In our own country the reformers of a century ago who struggled for the abolition of inhuman cruelties and restrictions, and argued in favour of the simplest rights for the workers, were feared and denounced, just as the Bolsheviks are to-day, as people who were out to destroy civilization. And yet to-day we see in these Bolsheviks of a hundred years ago the very mildest and most rational of reformers, and it is difficult not to think of their opponents, who so often brought their noble efforts to nought, as anything but monsters of inhumanity, seducers of their own reason, traitors to their own highest instincts; and where Christianity was concerned fulfilling the rôle of Judas.

## WORTHY CHILDREN OF OUR FATHERS

### *WORTHY CHILDREN OF OUR FATHERS*

It is therefore necessary constantly to remind ourselves that in private life such people were often most humane and kindly, and that the doctrines which justified the social order as an embodiment of God's will were held in many cases by truly saintly persons devoting their lives to certain kindly ministrations to the poor, and no doubt working the miracle of bringing happiness to individuals in spite of the diabolical nature of their surroundings. The fact is, of course, that once any reform reaches the stage of becoming law, the mind gets used to it, it is gradually accepted, if not by its opposers, at least by the sons of its opposers, as 'the normal thing,' and (eventually) as 'the right thing'; custom gives it sanction, and the truth which it embodies as to men's obligations to each other at long last works its way into the public conscience. The same sort of people who a century and a quarter ago procured the defeat of Bills to restrict a child's working day to twelve hours, on the ostensible grounds that such a step would destroy profits, and that a fifteen-hour day was good discipline, and quite harmless to a child's health, nowadays would oppose the idea of child labour at all, at least before the age of twelve or fourteen. But the 'Bolshevism' of one age becomes

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the 'common sense' and 'common humanity' of the next. Can we for a moment believe that the process of enlightenment has reached its culmination? Has the owning of property ceased now to exercise its perverting influence upon our minds? We *do* admit many rights to the workers, but progress is slow, and is it not certain that our descendants will feel the same pain and surprise at our lack of sympathy and understanding which we feel at contemplating the child-persecutors of one hundred years ago? Is it not probable that the evolution of our ideas of justice will not stop till equality of opportunity for all others as for ourselves is recognized as the A B C of Christian ethics? Tracing the line of development in our sense of social responsibility and also of the modern reinterpretation of Christianity, it is impossible to imagine that it will stop short of this.

### *EVOLUTION OR REVOLUTION?*

The Communists have taken a big step in advance of us in giving effect to ideas which under a bourgeois system it must be admitted could be arrived at only over many generations. We judge them ruthless to the middle classes in the speed and drastic nature of their revolution; they judge us ruthless in the painful slowness of our evolution—ruthless, not to

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a minority in our society, but to the great majority represented by the 'disendowed.' The Communists deny, of course, that ours is even an 'evolution' towards the great common end of equality, of universal emancipation and of world peace; they see no end to the miseries of mankind but in such a culmination of them that a revolution like their own offers the only escape.

Take the case of education. The idea that all children should enter life with equal opportunities of education, equal opportunities of development and of service, would be repudiated by most middle-class people to-day with much the same reasoning as one hundred years ago forbade the children of the workers to be educated at all. No doubt the 'Utopian' idea of an equal chance for all, by slow and faltering steps, would in any case end by gaining a foothold in our minds. But at the present rate of progress it might take centuries, and in the meantime the Communists are proving that this idea represents nothing Utopian, but an actuality rapidly being realized in the twenty-four different Republics known as the U.S.S.R. And the education system throughout Russia is only *one* of the several colossal experiments by which the Communists are seeking the most rapid means of liberating the human soul. All their vast schemes for the emancipation of, formerly 'subject' nationalities—emancipation of the workers and the emancipation of womanhood; all the

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innumerable institutions and organizations which serve these great purposes—Rest Homes, Holiday Homes, Workers' Clubs, Crêches, Hospitals; all the cultural institutions, Museums, Art Galleries, Theatres, which used to be the preserve of a small middle class—all are now available for every worker. These achievements constitute a challenge to our civilization, to our different ideals, to our different methods. What response does the outside world make to this challenge? Put briefly, it seems to amount to this: We cannot forgive the Communists for not having allowed us to destroy them—themselves and all their works.

As we cannot destroy them, we seem to spare no effort and to shrink from no degradation in the misrepresentation of them. A book, for instance, obtains great vogue, referring all their activities at bottom to a new and inhuman philosophy, a philosophy which works to eliminate all 'individuality' in man. Granted that one can obtain quotations setting forth some such 'philosophy' from certain Communist exponents, what is the importance of this fact balanced against the other fact that the Communists, whatever their 'philosophy,' are doing far more to relieve Russia's dumb and helpless millions from their age-long bonds, to emancipate their individualities, than the middle classes with their apparently worthier philosophies would so far ever have dreamed of?

## 'LIFE' THE ULTIMATE VALUE

### 'LIFE' THE ULTIMATE VALUE

Is it surprising that in Russia they revolt against our 'bourgeois' methods, our ideas and values, and that their prejudice against everything 'bourgeois' seems to have become almost an obsession? The Communists seem to me to be making a prodigious effort to abolish the middle-class perspective, and to put first things first. That in this they also make very great mistakes goes without saying, but in some points they seem to me to succeed far better than we do. The really first thing to them is *life in itself*. This is the ultimate value. From this starting-point they seek to build society afresh. Every child who is born into their State, so far as human arrangements can secure it, must have an equal chance of life: life in all its possible fullness, freedom and beauty, for body, mind, and soul. Whatever obstructs this purpose must go, and therefore, first and foremost, the private holding of capital. They have exposed and condemned our habit of thinking of human 'good' in different terms according to which class is in question. To them, the bourgeois shows muddle-headed self-deception when he maintains that what is 'good' for the sons of his poorer neighbours is not 'good' for his own. Such distinctions cannot possibly be reconciled with their conception

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of the value of life in itself. That any individual, because he was born in degraded circumstances, should be further punished by society and condemned to a position of inferiority, is similarly irreconcilable with their reading of 'good.' They have revolted against the injustice and cruelty inherent in the conception of 'inferior' classes.

### *THE 'STATE OF SIEGE' IN RUSSIA*

It will naturally be objected, however, that such an appreciation of the Communist conception of the value of life seems at variance with their apparent contempt for the life and property of the bourgeoisie; or the acts of oppression against dissident Socialists incidental to the despotism which monopolizes all real political power for the small Communist Party. It is not, however, difficult to understand this apparent inconsistency if one compares the present state of affairs in Russia with what obtained in our own country at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when, as I have previously mentioned, the rulers of England set up what might be compared to a permanent 'state of siege' in defence of property and the 'established order' against danger of revolution. Communist 'terrorism,' dreadful though it is, is surely less dreadful than the terrorism sanctioned by our ancestors of three or

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four generations ago, and continued to a certain extent to times relatively recent. Thirdly, the Communist state of siege is a transition stage, whereas it may be doubtful whether the former rulers of England could ever sincerely have expected the golden age when the masses would finally have resigned themselves to serfdom, starvation, and every form of misery. And finally, if we are tempted to think that Humanity, apart from the Communists, has outgrown the use of political terrorism, let us not forget Fascism, nor our own persecution of C.O.s during the war. And what if a European war were to break out again? What if any body of workers in our country were to declare a 'Peace strike'? What measures would seem to our rulers too extreme to break the will of those who refused support of a bourgeois war? Exactly the same arguments could be used to justify the extremest measures which the Communists have used and still use in their 'proletarian' war. Is there, indeed, *any* means of force or strategy which has ever been used by the Communists in prosecution of their struggle which has not been, and would not always be, fully exploited at times of crisis by bourgeois Governments? To our sophisticated minds such means are, in fact, justified or not justified according to the degree of importance we attach to the ends in view. Is a 'vital interest' at stake? That is the real point. The real reason why the tyrannies of the Communists are so widely

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denounced is simply, in the great majority of cases, because the denouncers do *not* sympathize with the ends in view. If the Government was a White Russian one struggling to suppress Communist plots, who can doubt for a moment that our Press and public would maintain a discreet silence? The language of the *Morning Post*, *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* would be found only in the *New Leader*.

## THE MORAL OF THE GREAT WAR

To the minds of Russia's masses, made receptive by their sufferings during the war (we are apt to forget—if, indeed, we ever realized—how far more extreme these sufferings were in Russia even than in France or Belgium), the Great War stood as an overwhelming demonstration of the universal bourgeois faith in every method of brute force. We should study the history of 1914 to 1917 in Russia to realize how the culminating lesson of history for them was burnt into their souls. The Communists were not slow to point the moral. Let them use the same weapons as the bourgeois Government, but for ends which were really worth while—the liberation of the Peoples of all the world in place of their endless degradation. Similarly, in the Settlement of 1918, and in the Secret Treaties which so soon came to light, people saw the express repudiation of every

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moral principle, and even of specific promises for which the Allies had professed to fight. Here was the crowning indictment of bourgeois ethics and religion. Let us at least be honest, said the Communist instructors, let us have done with all the shams, all the hypocrisy of bourgeois 'morality' and bourgeois 'religion,' let us profess to believe only in that which is a demonstrable scientific truth, let us plant our feet squarely and honestly on the naked rock of materialism.

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The Communist standpoint is roughly as follows: the ultimate objective is a democracy where all individuals, so far as human means can procure it, shall enjoy equal opportunities, and the descendants of the former 'upper' class shall suffer from no prejudice whatever. But the transition stage has, of necessity, to partake of the nature of a war. The existence of the new order of society is so constantly and dangerously menaced by the hostility of Foreign Powers, and by the Whites who are continually intriguing with them, that activities likely to become dangerous to the State simply cannot be allowed. Despotism of the Government appears as essential as it is to a general in the field, and the life, liberties, and property of individuals cannot be considered too nicely when the fate of the Cause, the freedom and lives of the people as a whole, and the gains of all the costly victories of the past, are hanging in the balance.

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We do, in fact, find that in Russia to-day such members of the middle class as accept the new State, and are prepared to be loyal to it (and there are quite a large number of such people), escape the imprisonment and persecution to which it is often supposed (outside Russia) that they all alike are victims. There are many, indeed, in the employ of the Government. Against them as individuals there is no animus, at any rate on the part of the leaders; it is against the bourgeois *ideas*—i.e., their whole conception of society—and against their existence as a separate and superior class, that unrelenting war has been declared.

## CAPITALISM AND DEMOCRACY INCOMPATIBLE

We must realize, too, that in the eyes of the Communists our Western ‘Democracies,’ with all their apparent liberties of which we are so proud, appear a sham. Equality of voting power, even where this much has been attained, means very little, they argue, so long as the power of private wealth lies behind the power of the vote. In the bourgeois civilizations money is the greatest political power, and our proletarian voters become the dupes and tools of those who have this unlimited power to mislead them. Votes can only have equal value where education is universal and where there is no

## CAPITALISM AND DEMOCRACY INCOMPATIBLE

endowment of a particular class to advertise its own claims by buying up the means of propaganda, and to entrench itself by the exercise of social pressure. For among the privileges of wealth, and the argument I think is irresistible, this is the greatest—the power of perpetuating the social order which confers the privileges.

The Communist conception of social justice in any case forbids the accumulation of wealth (to large amounts) in private hands. But wealth is also the most dangerous of the political weapons of which the opponents of the new social order must be disarmed. So long as capital is mainly in private hands, all talk of 'freedom' for the people must remain a fraud. Capital, and all its powers, political and social, must be transferred to the control of the State acting for the proletariat. It is true that until the proletariat is educated, so that it recognizes for itself the evils inherent in the 'bourgeois' system of society, Governments must be controlled by those whose eyes are opened, i.e., by the Communist Party. This means the substitution of one minority rule for another; it is recognized as inevitable. But it is a transition stage, and the objective, the real Democracy, is being hastened by the two cardinal means, the disarming of the bourgeoisie and the universalizing of education. The above appears to be the standpoint from which the Communists are acting.

*WHICH FORM OF SOCIETY THE LEAST CRUEL?*

We condemn the numerous cruelties of the Bolsheviks, and their victims do indeed deserve our pity. The cruelties belong to a policy of inspiring Fear, which, by arousing the hostility of many who might otherwise be wholly friendly, demonstrates one of the ways in which Force defeats its own purposes. At the same time it is grossly unfair to forget that the Bolsheviks on their side condemn *our* cruelties—cruelties not incidental to a period of special struggle and difficulty, but apparently inherent in the ruthless social order which we accept. They see our victims in the innumerable beings born to lifelong hardship and degradation, crushed to death under the chariot wheels of an unmerciful 'upper class.' The Communists are out to abolish the sufferings of the workers, and to do it as rapidly as possible. Our measures of social reform work so slowly that the policy of changing conditions gradually and peacefully presents itself to them as an unnecessary and cruel prolonging of the agony, even if it could ultimately be successful (and even this they do not admit). Drastic methods of Revolution, followed by a period of despotism—this process seems to them far more certain and far more merciful than our long-drawn-out struggle of classes and parties.

## **WHICH FORM OF SOCIETY FAVOURS PEACE?**

To their minds a bourgeois type of civilization creates a State suffering from an organic disease, which must be dealt with by the knife and the health of the patient restored at the cost of temporary pain. The disease is too vital for any but the most drastic remedy.

## *WHICH FORM OF SOCIETY FAVOURS PEACE?*

Incidental to the bourgeois State are the antagonisms of nations and the ever more devastating wars that arise out of them. With the fall of the class system these wars, and the infinite cruelty they entail, would cease, for they are based on the conflict of bourgeois interests: in the past the ambitions of kings, superseded now by the ambitions of capitalists, financiers, and profiteers. In these international quarrels the 'proletariat' on either side is duped by the interested parties who control the Press and the Government; the People are the instruments and the victims of their only real enemies, the enemies in their midst.

In Russia I could see no signs of the nationalistic animus—the contempt or suspicion of the foreigner as such (with which one is sadly familiar at home); foreigners are simply the objects of 'a friendly curiosity'; its place is taken by the animus against the former bourgeoisie, firstly of their own country,

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but also against the corresponding 'oppressors' in other countries, and this attitude is strongly fostered by the rulers. It is their conviction that the militaristic side of nationalism would soon die a natural death if not constantly fanned by the propertied classes in their own interests. In their eyes, civil war in the cause of a real Democracy is far less terrible than international war for the acquisition of territory, for 'spheres of influence,' for trade routes, and such-like 'vital interests.' The Proletariat has everything to lose in such wars; the only war which for them is justified is the war for the emancipation of the Proletariat in every country, and as the Proletariats have no cause for quarrel with each other, their domination, it is argued, will bring everlasting peace; bourgeois wars, on the other hand, whatever the ostensible causes, and whichever side wins, are fought not only at the present sacrifice of the Proletariats on both sides, but prepare the way for their future sacrifice as well; one war inevitably provokes another, and the cruelty of it is prolonged *ad infinitum*. It must be admitted that the Great War can easily be represented as an example of this. A great overshadowing fact of our time is the failure of the Great War to secure permanent peace or the promised reign of righteousness for which our people were induced to sacrifice themselves. And yet our people, in spite of their irreparable losses, in spite of their lasting impoverishment, seem anything but

## WHICH FORM OF SOCIETY FAVOURS PEACE?

keenly alive to this tragic fact and to all its tremendous implications. What is the cause of this mental paralysis? Is it not to be found in our Press and in the score of other 'loud speakers' by which the false ideals of our bourgeois society are daily and hourly advertised, with their perpetual insistence on the wrong things, the cult which they carry with them of all that is trivial? Bound up with this general influence there is, of course, the more special one in the unseen working of the Armament interests. Both of these causes are now absent in Russia. Russia is the only Great Power in Europe which could have made the proposal for Universal Disarmament, because it is the only country where the private interest in armament manufacture has practically been eliminated, and also the only country where the people is educated up to such a proposal. The mass of the people there, the Red Army included, are now alive to the fact that with the *peoples* of other nationalities they can have no quarrel. An English soldier could never represent to the Russian people all the dreadful things which our soldiers, for instance, were taught during the Great War to see in the Germans. The Red soldiers would far rather open the eyes of the deluded 'enemy' than shoot him.

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### THE REAL PROMOTERS OF COMMUNISM

Why, then, our tireless anti-Bolshevik Campaign? It is nothing but impudence—a most successful piece of journalistic bluff, to hold up the methods of the Communists for condemnation to the English people as if they were something new in the history of Russia or unusual in the rest of the world, either formerly or now. No impious *originality* can be claimed for their methods of coercion, nor, likewise, for their violently condemned methods of propaganda abroad. However much ahead of their times they may be in their internationalism, as well as in the social objects they deem practicable, for some of their *methods* the same cannot be said! But why should we *expect* them to be in advance of their times in these too? The Communist Party have never professed to join the Society of Friends! They still believe in the use of Force—I was going to say about as much as the rest of the world does, but in view of their proposals for Total Disarmament, this would hardly be fair. Their treatment of ‘subject’ nationalities, too, even taking into account the experiences of Georgia, shows on the whole far less reliance upon Force.

If we are really so concerned at the fate of Russia’s bourgeoisie as our general abuse of ‘Bolsheviks’

## THE REAL PROMOTERS OF COMMUNISM

suggests, it is time that we woke up to another very relevant fact. We should see in Russia's exiles the victims of causes in which our own class has had, and continues to have, an active share. It was the Allies, with their pressure on Kerensky in 1917 to continue the war (regardless of Russia's awful state of disorganization and famine and of the sickened mind of the People), who played into the hands of the Communists and ensured success for the October Revolution. To go a little farther back in history, had our forbears taken to heart the executions, the horrors of Russian prisons, and of exile to Siberia under the Tsarist despotism, it is possible that the opinion of the outside world might have impressed the Tsar and his circle. In so far as the *élite*, the governing classes of other 'civilizations,' accepted his régime and gave it support (in the forms of loans and otherwise), these classes have their share of responsibility for the cataclysm in which the pent-up feelings of Russia's suffering masses at long last found vent. But if the Tsar, twenty-five or thirty years ago, hung or flogged to death hundreds of peasants, it was 'political executions'; if to-day the Soviet shoots a half-dozen of its political enemies, it is 'murder.' If the Tsar denied the vote to the masses, it was 'political necessity'; if the Soviet keeps its opponents off the register, it is 'tyranny' and 'persecution.' Let me again repeat that this tendency to inconsistency, in which our minds seem

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set, helps to cause the violence of the Communist reaction against everything 'bourgeois.' We have here, indeed, one good example of the main theme of this treatise, i.e., that the conditions of our Society cut us off from any real understanding of the experience, and therefore of the outlook, of other classes. We *can*, to some degree, sympathize with the fate of Russia's middle classes to-day. Ten, fifteen, twenty, fifty years ago we did not sympathize with the fate of the Russian proletariat (nor of our own). Each decade as it passes makes the truth clearer in retrospect, but the best opportunity to act upon it has passed as well. We cannot understand the mind of the proletariat even of our own day; and yet if only we could see things to-day as we certainly shall see them to-morrow, so much might be saved.

### THE ETHICS OF 'CONFISCATION'

There *is*, I believe, some modicum of genuine sympathy among our middle classes for Russia's former aristocracy and landowners, but although it is much less rare than sympathy with the proletariat, I cannot believe that even it is either very deep or very widespread. It would be a great step forward in civilization if we *could* sympathize far more than we do even with the minority propertied class of other countries. A little sympathy, for in-

## THE ETHICS OF 'CONFISCATION'

stance, in the Settlement of 1918 might have come to the rescue of our common sense in ruling out some of the absurd 'Indemnity' schemes. But seeing that our social system does so much to crush sympathy on the part of the 'ruling' classes where the multitude of poorer brethren are concerned, we can hardly expect to develop this human faculty what one might describe as 'naturally,' even where our own class is concerned. Our middle class certainly do not feel sympathy for the dispossessed bourgeoisie of Russia to anything like the same lively degree that the Communists of Russia feel alive to the lot of the world's 'disinherited' proletarians. The Government of our own country, however, recently acted no less drastically than the Communist Government as regards the wholesale confiscation of middle-class property. As the result of the Indemnity after the Great War, countless owners of capital in Central Europe were reduced to penury.

In Germany to-day the Government investment-holders of 1918 may, perhaps, receive sums amounting to from 1 per cent. to 10 per cent. of the dividends on their former capital (which is now irrecoverable). Our statesmen and financial experts in 1918 cannot surely have acted in ignorance of what they were doing? The British public, as represented in its political spokesmen and Press, showed at that time a more than Communistic callousness in regard to rights of private property. The ruin of the greater

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part of the middle class in Central Europe was accepted by us only a few years ago quite calmly. To-day the exiled Russian countess in Paris is to my mind not more entitled to sympathy than the starving countess in Berlin and Vienna, and the starving governess in the same garret the savings of whose lifetime were wiped out in 1918.

And the confiscation of the property of German bourgeoisie in our own country, and of the Missions in German colonies, was a more drastic proceeding, and in the latter case more directly anti-Christian, than any with which we tax the Communists.

In Russia the expropriation of the bourgeoisie was at least the price of a great social advance; their downfall went together with a veritable resurrection for the vast majority of the community. In Central Europe, on the other hand, our Bolshevik methods against the middle classes were accompanied by universal and extreme suffering for the workers, and a setback to social progress, from which even now there is small sign of recovery. Is there really any essential difference of principle between the confiscation of property of one's own nationals and that of other nationals? From the moral point of view there seems to me far more to be said in justification of the former.

## THE PARALLEL OF THE WAR INDEMNITY

### *THE PARALLEL OF THE WAR INDEMNITY*

In any case it is interesting to trace the parallel of the war indemnity a little farther. The principle of a war indemnity is nominally that the property of the most guilty party in the dispute should be at the disposal of the other party. We may sincerely believe that the Central Powers were the guilty party in the origin of the war, and also that this justified us in causing a countless number of bourgeois citizens to be reduced to penury; but the Communists, with certainly equal sincerity, believe that the workers of Russia were for centuries the injured party in a state of affairs which culminated in the civil war of 1917.<sup>1</sup> The wrongs they suffered do seem of a more definite and finally proven character than those which were believed to have been proposed against us in the minds of Germans and their rulers in 1914. At any rate, if one grants at all the principle of a war indemnity, the Communists could make out, if they chose to adopt our method of argument, quite as good a case for dispossessing the vanquished as we had in 1918.

Our Society has shown no compunction in

<sup>1</sup> "For ages the peasantry were exposed to the arbitrary power and ruthless exactions of those who were placed over them" (*Russia*, by Sir D. Mackenzie Wallace, 1912).

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requiring the wholesale handing over to themselves of the property of others as compensation for our losses and injuries in the war. The ostensible Communist justification, of course, is rather different, for he believes the wealth of a country to belong *in any case* to the working proletariat, to the people who (according to his view of economics) produce it in the first instance. In confiscating land and capital from the bourgeoisie and transferring it to the State, he believes that he is simply taking possession of what has always by rights belonged to society as a whole. The Communist, moreover, in his position as victor, has *not* condemned the vanquished, as we have done, to a life which he would consider terrible for himself. The expropriated in Russia are simply reduced to the same level as the expropriators.

I do not suggest that the Communists themselves make much of the parallel of a war indemnity. I am merely putting it forward to show how little basis there is in reason for the righteous indignation which such numerous people in our country seem to feel against the Communists, but who take the confiscation of wealth under the 1918 Indemnity as an unquestionable act of justice.

To the Communists, of course, the redistribution of Society's wealth is justified by the Marxian economic theory of how wealth is created. We come then to the very large question of what are our real 'Rights of Property.'

## THE PROBLEM OF 'RIGHTS OF PROPERTY'

### *THE PROBLEM OF 'RIGHTS OF PROPERTY'*

We are familiar with the Communists' catchwords on the subject—as to capitalism being 'robbery,' and the capitalist a 'parasite on society,' and the like. They seem crude and exaggerated, but few of us take much trouble to study the economics on which they are based. They are founded, of course, on an exaggerated economic theory as to the proportion of wealth which is the direct product of manual labour. The part played by the organizer, the manager, and the employing class generally is unfairly minimized. The works of Karl Marx remain the Bible of the Communists. Marx's viewpoint was coloured as a result of his burning sense of the injustices imposed upon the workers, and his reaction against the at least equally erroneous economics of his contemporaries, who used their science (by the 'iron law of wages' and other conceptions) to condemn the workers to a position of hopeless servitude. A more dispassionate study of economics has since established a midway position. But it is no by economics alone that a social system can be tested.

It does not, in fact, necessitate a study of economics (highly desirable though that may be) in order to recast in the name of Justice traditional ideas as regards the rights of property.

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This much is surely true, that one cannot regard any wealth acquired or inherited by an individual as, strictly speaking, his *own* in any but a *legal* sense. His powers, or the original donor's powers, of producing it, including not only those due to education and all the factors of environment, but to heredity too, are gifts to him from Society. That one man can be a more effective instrument than others in the production of wealth is his good fortune; to some extent, no doubt, his 'merit,' but even such 'merit' as the power of effort, initiative, industry, and the like, based as these are on heredity and developed by education, is not a 'merit' which can by any means be separated from his 'good fortune' in receiving values created by Society. We have *not* the right 'to do what we like with our own,' because, after all, it is *not* our own in any but the most superficial sense. Under our present system the rewards allowed for merit vary according to the difference of social status, in a way which in any case is vastly out of proportion, and most unfair to the worker.

## WEALTH AND CHRISTIAN PRECEPTS

In the Communist State a most valuable experiment is in progress which will help to show how much wealth can be allowed to the individual as a stimulus to effort and saving, without conferring

## WEALTH AND CHRISTIAN PRECEPTS

privileges and powers which are undesirable from the point of view of the Community. These privileges amount to so many barriers between their possessors and their non-possessors, such that only a spiritual genius can wholly surmount them. The sympathy which enabled St. Francis to identify his own interests with those of the poorest and most suffering made it impossible for him to retain his privileges. Lesser degrees of such sympathy are of course common enough, and are to be measured by the change in mode of life which accompanies them. Christians who even now believe that the inequalities of Society are a Divine ordinance must also see Divine sanction in the distribution of wealth which allows not only two coats but twelve to one man, while his brother has none. This point of view is not favourable to the cultivation of sympathy. On the other hand, Christians who wish to avoid the mischievous privilege of the superfluous coats must also wish to see the distribution of their wealth carried out in the most business-like way possible, i.e., by the machinery of the State, which alone can secure the equitable distribution of the means of subsistence and with it the universal levelling of wealth's barriers to mutual understanding and good will. Throughout the vast population of Russia, mutual understanding and sympathy, in other words, human unity, have been made easier for future generations than in any other 'civilized' country

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(except, perhaps, for a few tiny communi :  
Have the errors in the mode of achievement been  
unusual and so deadly as to poison all the good  
The progress of every civilization in the world, nc  
least our own, has been attended by innumerable  
errors and evils, and yet it is usual to judge such  
good as does surround us on its own merits.

### *WEALTH AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE*

Again, as regards the powers of influence apart from other privileges which wealth conveys, in Western countries we can see how a vast private fortune, in the powers it confers, may almost be compared to an independent government set up within a State. It may constitute 'a power behind the throne,' which can turn the scale at any crucial moment in our foreign or domestic policy.

What, then, if the Communists are right that the *laws* of our form of society confer an artificial 'right' to property which is not only non-ethical, but incompatible with the real interests of Society? To the Communist this now stands out as an A B C fact. Those who cannot see it he believes to be blinded and misled, plunged in evil and ignorance. In fact, he thinks in just the same terms about the middle classes of all countries, as the middle classes, in general, use when they think about him. In our

'THE ANALOGY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

country, for instance, the public is encouraged by every means to mix up Communist theories as to the State's right to control the means of production —i.e., capital—with a repudiation of the Eighth Commandment and a general licence to immorality of all kinds. But the level of private honesty in Russia certainly appears to the traveller to be much the same as in other countries. The business world, too, seems to be quite satisfied with the reliability of the U.S.S.R. where the latter's own contracts are concerned. (It is a pity that it is not more generally known that arrangements for credits to the extent of £10,000,000 on the part of one of our Banks had been concluded when the rupture of relations in 1927 destroyed this opening for British trade and employment.)

*THE ANALOGY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION*

What, then, is the real basis for the attitude which maintains a state of incipient war against the Communist country? Historically, one may see in it a repetition of the panic created among the English ruling classes by the French Revolution. In the course of last century, however, the dreaded words 'Liberty, Fraternity, Equality' did 'come to seem harmless enough. Now the Communists have, in effect, revived the once ominous creed with

## THE CHALLENGE OF BOLSHEVISM

promises of how, by the destruction of capitalism, it may at last be rendered effective. They have challenged our time-honoured rights of property, and every year of the success of the Communist régime makes the challenge more unanswerable and more dangerous. It is the voice of a great fear which speaks through British policy and public opinion. Do we then in our secret hearts feel there may be some measure of truth in the Communists' conviction that our Order of Society has become out of date and is destined to be replaced by something better?

Few serious people would now deny that the final effect of the French Revolution was a constructive one, and that its influence may be traced in much good throughout the world in political thought and institutions. It will probably not take another century till the Communist Revolution can be viewed equally calmly, and its effects on history may perhaps stand out even more conspicuously. Once more Panic will have proved itself a bad political counsellor.

## *IDEALISTS IN SPITE OF THEMSELVES*

The most important change introduced by Communism is not merely an economic change, nor yet a political one (though the system of government by Soviets represents another original and valuable

## IDEALISTS IN SPITE OF THEMSELVES

experiment). More fundamental than the economic change, and what makes the latter possible, is the change in values represented by the replacing of the motive of acquisition by that of service. At the bottom of this, and the really fundamental thing, is a change of attitude towards human nature in general. The Communist view of human nature seems to me far more inspired by Faith, Hope, and Charity than our own. To them the prime cause of evil, that which puts Faith, Hope, and Charity at such a discount in bourgeois States, and which forbids the Communists to grant equal terms to representatives of the old Order in their own State, is the possession of capital, and in practice, therefore, also of private property (beyond a very limited point). It is the poison of wealth which stultifies men's natural instincts of fellowship. Once a State is delivered from this perverse influence acting on any of its citizens, and granted also a certain degree of education, all can be trusted to receive equal rights. Their confidence in unspoilt human nature forbids the Communists to believe in self-interest as the indispensable motive by which alone the economic machine can be kept going. The doctrine of each man for himself, and the devil (in this case the Board of Guardians, the drink-shop, the prison, and the lunatic asylum) take the hindmost, is finally discarded. I suppose we are all to some degree disillusioned as regards the vision that

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so inspired the Economists of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, who really believed that in working for himself the profit-maker inevitably, by a magnificent provision of Nature, served also the best interests of the Community. That every citizen, however, should as a matter of course learn to work for the good of the Community, and to understand that his own best interests are served in so doing, still seems Utopian to our heathen pessimistic minds. In the U.S.S.R., on the other hand, public spirit is rapidly taking its place in the same category of virtues as honesty or personal cleanliness: something which it is only good manners to assume of one's neighbour until there is proof to the contrary. Every school, every workers' club, every popular institution in the U.S.S.R., serves as a centre of education in the civic spirit. It is a basic matter for the good of the Community, and therefore it is given a first place in education and propaganda, not left to more or less accidental, private supplementary effort.

### *CITIZENS OF THE WORLD*

It must be added that the civic spirit to which the Communist appeals is of a more advanced kind than much of what we usually call 'public spirit.' The true Communist is to regard himself as a citizen of the world, and the service which is expected from

## CITIZENS OF THE WORLD

him is for the world of workers anywhere, regardless of nationality. In Communist teaching a big step, in fact, is taken towards a genuine recognition of the unity of mankind. The advance may be compared to that made by primitive man when his fear of a multitude of devils becomes narrowed down to the fear of *one* devil! Inherent in the nationality feeling, as usually fostered, is the readiness to identify any alien nationality with the devil, according as the exigencies of any particular quarrel may demand it. No army and no public nowadays could respond whole-heartedly to the clarions of war unless inspired with a sense of incarnate evil to be overcome. Idealism must be dragged in somehow. But there is nothing fundamental in the causes which may at any time, e.g., for the Britisher, dress up German or French, Turk or Russian, in the guise of devil. There is at least something more consistent in the reasoning which for the Communist assigns to the capitalist class throughout the world the rôle of devil; and the believer can feel that matters are in question of fundamental importance to mankind as a whole. The innumerable and constantly changing vertical divisions of humanity, as split up on the nationality basis, are replaced, in the eyes of the Communist, by just one horizontal cleavage. Moreover, this one devil of capitalism, which splits up the world and destroys man's sense of brotherhood, is represented to the Communist as nearing the end of his reign;

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the final goal of universal peace and good will is one for which every Communist must work, and can work with faith and hope. It is part of the training of every soldier in the Red Army to imbue him with a great idea of service and of internationalism.<sup>1</sup> It is part of his oath not only "to protect the interests of the workers and peasants of our Socialist Republic," but also "the rights and interests of the workers of the world." The motive appealed to in the Red soldier is, in fact, a lofty one (although, unfortunately, it makes him an object of horror to the Foreign Offices of the rest of the world!). The severe régime of discipline, with its brutal physical punishments, which prevailed in the Tsarist Army has disappeared. The Red soldier is no longer inspired by dread, but by idealism.

The Communist Government cherishes the Communist spirit, as every other Government cherishes the National spirit. In practice it must be admitted that this has meant a really extraordinary change for the better in the conditions of all the peoples who were formerly subject nationalities of the Russian Empire.<sup>2</sup>

Think what it means alone to be able to say that those dreadful orgies of blood and pillage, termed "Pogroms," are a thing of the past; that the armed

<sup>1</sup> See H. N. Brailsford's *How the Soviets Work*.

<sup>2</sup> See Professor Herford's article in the *Contemporary Review*, June 1927.

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forces of the 'Christian' State no longer look on while Jews are robbed, violated, murdered under their eyes (as happened in 1906); that a Jewish woman of the poorer classes need no longer be a prostitute in order to be free to travel where she pleases; that if Christ were born in the U.S.S.R. to-day at least He would not enter the world under a curse; think, in fact—if you can—what it means that in Communist Russia a Jew is now, at last, on an absolute equality with every one else.

Think what it means that at last there should be, if not the *political* equality of Communist professions, at least *administrative* equality, and also complete cultural freedom throughout the twenty-four 'autonomous' Soviet Republics which make up the U.S.S.R.! What a release in human powers of happiness and of service that all these scores of races are beginning to receive education, all being allowed the free use of their own language; that all offices and professions are open to Jew or Tartar, Pole or German, Armenian or Bashkir!

In the treatment of the Nationalities we see the same thing as in the working of the State economic machine, or in the working of the Red Army; *confidence is placed in new and higher motives*. There is less reliance on Force, more reliance on freedom; far less belief in the necessity of suppression, but in its place confidence in men's good will and in their power of useful co-operation. But is it not

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strange that we should leave it to these immoral Bolsheviks to credit human nature with the capacity of response to more honourable incentives than those of private profit and of a self-righteous nationalism —those godless incentives which we have so long invested with a false garb of respectability? As an example of the new order of incentives, the self-denying ordinance of the Communist Party in the matter of salaries is significant. The sacrifice it represents no doubt must seem a small one to them, measured by the standard of sacrifice set up in the Russia of the past. The memory of countless martyrdoms is still fresh in the minds of Russia's rulers and of Russia's people—the time when to take up the cause of the people meant almost certain imprisonment, exile or death. It must surely be the terrible experiences of the past which have helped to give to the Russians of to-day their seriousness and the power of acting on a motive higher than the individualistic, self-regarding, and exorbitantly acquisitive one which in the West we are accustomed to accept as inevitable and essential. The simple unostentatious life of Russia's rulers represents a notable advance in *real* civilization—real because based on a more enlightened interpretation of human nature, both of its needs and of its capacities; an interpretation which incidentally is also a more Christian one.

## WHAT COMMUNISM HAS DEMONSTRATED

### *WHAT COMMUNISM HAS DEMONSTRATED*

Is the Communistic ideal really too visionary for us Westerners to take it seriously? When the Communists seized power in Russia, their opponents gave them 'a few weeks' run' at most. That was ten years ago. Since then progress in order, welfare and strength has been continuous. Nevertheless, the 'impracticability' argument against Socialism is still being used in other countries with undiminished conviction. As regards Russia, it was unbelievable in 1917 that these ignorant working men and peasants, with their childish ideas of politics and economics, could maintain themselves in power and actually control the Government machinery of this colossal State of 140 million inhabitants and covering one-seventh of the globe! For people without any experience of governing, who had only recently been allowed even to organize Trade Unions for themselves, people, moreover, as unbusinesslike by nature as Russians appear to be, it would indeed have seemed madness, even on the part of well-wishers, to anticipate the least measure of success in an attempt to reorganize society on a new basis. It was a most ambitious, unparalleled and altogether extraordinary experiment. To the impartial onlooker the wonder must surely be *not* that the new régime shows many

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errors and failures at certain points, but that, on the whole, it has worked, is working, and promises to go on working. It was marvellous to me as I travelled about both in towns and villages that the life of the country should present, at any rate on the surface, an appearance so normal and so happy. One must remember, too, that the experiment was introduced in a country reduced to the last degree of chaos, famine, and penury as the result of the World War, and that the difficulties within were matched by the difficulties without, where world-wide opposition, including the attacks of the Allies, had to be encountered. Surely a moment's consideration is enough to show that under such circumstances even the partial success of a Communist régime is a fact of extraordinary significance. Russia now represents the unique example in the world of a country where great strides have actually been made towards the realization of a Socialist ideal. What is the matter with us all that a fact so startling still receives so little attention?

The Communist experiment seemed crazy to outsiders, at bottom because of our sceptical conception of human nature. We have now been given a demonstration that a far more hopeful and charitable conception of human nature than our own is nearer the truth. The Communist motive has worked. Communism would never have won, and the experiment could never have lasted with

## WHAT COMMUNISM HAS DEMONSTRATED

increasing success over a period of ten years, if any large proportion of the active spirits had been out for their own self-advancement. The immense difficulties of the attempt, including the ignorance and lack of experience of the experimenters themselves, have been overcome, thanks to their powers of disinterested co-operation in the public weal. They had faith, and they removed mountains.

We have here a fact of world-shaking import. That so few people are aware of the shake is a sad commentary on their own condition, mental and spiritual, and on the state of society which conduces to their inertia, and it is also very ominous for the peaceful development of their own country. If our middle classes could wake up to the truths which our age has already unfolded, and face them in time, the desperate state of feeling which at times of crisis leads to bloodshed would never arise. In our country we seem quite safe from revolution now, but what might happen under the strain of a war and a possible cutting off of supplies? It is in itself a strong indictment of our social order that the possession of wealth seems to pervert men's minds into the condition which makes them powerless to face the facts around them; even the facts which threaten themselves. The power of sympathy is replaced by concern for property and its interests, attended by blind self-satisfaction and a fatal self-deception.

*A REFUGE FOR CHRISTIAN IDEAS*

The belief that our present class system, with all its incidental cruelties, is something fastened on us by Providence, instead of something which we could completely change to-morrow if only we wanted to, indicates a very low and primitive conception of God, and of the meaning of the word 'Love,' which we use so freely in connection with Him. Christianity, if taken simply, teaches a very optimistic view of human nature, as containing all the divine potencies waiting only to be drawn upon by the exercise of faith. What has been proved concerning our powers of Suggestion (including Auto-Suggestion) confirms the reasonableness of the teachings of Jesus. But our Society habitually exercises Suggestion, or 'faith,' in the reverse direction, and we continue to insist on self-interest as the only motive on which it is reasonable to build the fabric of society. If anything makes Socialism Utopian, it is the baneful working of this godless 'faith,' for ever worshipping in human nature that which is evil and discrediting that which is good. So it is that in the adoption of a more optimistic and therefore also more Christian standpoint, I feel that the Communists have gone a step beyond us. Even their faulty economics have not availed to prevent them making important headway in practice.

## A FRESH START IN 'CIVILIZATION'

Seriousness, love of humanity, self-sacrifice, optimism, faith—these things have sufficed to secure a startling means of success ; and are they not essentially religious instincts? It is true that the Christian sense of the value of life is bound up with a belief in man's spiritual and eternal nature. But this did not prevent the early Christians from looking for a realization of Christ's Kingdom upon *earth*. The Bolshevik stresses only the importance of *this* life, and denies the reality of any 'spiritual' nature. Nevertheless, his sense of the value of life in itself, even if it is only life in this world, is surely also in essence what we mean by a religious instinct.

The Communists repudiate, of course, the language of religion, but their actions are so much more important than their words that I do not feel we need take the latter very seriously. It is part of their wholesale reaction against everything bourgeois, and against a Church which allied itself with political Despotism, that they repudiate all the familiar terms and formulas. In their effort to start everything *de novo*, even a fundamental philosophy of life, it is not to be wondered at if some of their writers and thinkers are guilty of a good many extravagances.

## A FRESH START IN 'CIVILIZATION',

Let me sum up then what it is in Communism which appears to me to mark a most notable step

## THE CHALLENGE OF BOLSHEVISM

forward in the progress of civilization. The mental attitude which is *implied* in the social organization under Communism is incomparably more important than any *professed* philosophy. What is implied may be described as follows:—

- (a) A sense of the value of life in itself.
- (b) A realization of the unity of Mankind and of the good of each as contained in the good of all.
- (c) Faith that life here on earth *can* be made good and beautiful for *all*.
- (d) Faith in the motive of service rather than in that of acquisition as a practicable means to this end.

The Communists have, in fact, revived and applied what are, historically, essentially Christian ideas, and applied them where they always ought to have been applied, i.e., to society and our social duties. In their provision for the masses, in their appeals on behalf of the proletariats of other nations, we find embodied these simple dictates of love and faith —so far as they go, a sound practical Christ-like religion. Has this matter then no interest for ‘Christians’ in our country? Is the revision of the Prayer Book really of incomparably greater importance?

Let the Communists then repudiate Christianity or any form of religion with their lips! It is a lesser

## A NEW CHAPTER IN RELIGION

evil than to confess Christ with the lips when the heart and will of man, as expressed in the social order he builds up, is far from Him—so far as to constitute an eloquent denial of what He taught.

The 'Atheist' Society of Russia exhibits a cartoon where Christ is caricatured sitting among the sensual-looking bourgeoisie, and preaching with them to 'the poor.' Such a picture seems profane and blasphemous, and is horrifying to us. But to Christ the inequalities of so-called Christians and our social cruelties would be far more horrifying. He would not accept them any more than the Bolsheviks do. It is we, the bourgeoisie of all countries, who profess Christianity, and who have so long assumed Christ's assent for our order of society, who have drawn that cartoon. Let the Atheists of Russia speak the *language* of blasphemy; is it more than the *echo* of the blasphemy which has so long been embodied in the social order we uphold? The Christianity which the Communists repudiate bears little relation to anything worthy of the name.

## A NEW CHAPTER IN RELIGION

In Russia social practice is being purified. I cannot help feeling that in the intellectual field as well a wholesome clearance may really be taking place. One feels the possibility that when the forest

## THE CHALLENGE OF BOLSHEVISM

fire has completed its work of apparent devastation, the green shoots of renewed growth will appear among the charred embers and the blackened stumps. In their wholesale rejection of Idealism in favour of a crude materialism one can see first of all a reaction against Western Civilization—against the inconsistencies of its idealist professions with the selfish materialism of its practices; against the sophistries of its theories, the self-deception of the minds which it produces. In so far as the Communists are making a really great effort to live up to a higher standard of intellectual honesty and consistency, their work is not the destructive one which it seems.

Can Christians claim honesty and consistency if, for instance, at certain times they repudiate all Christian tenets by recourse to war and all the methods not only of brute force, but of cunning and deception which are incidental to war? To do so in theory means, when it comes to practice, the identification of Christianity and savagery, and words lose their meaning altogether. If we *really* believed in what as Christians we profess, it would be impossible to reconcile Christian professions with such practices. It would be better to face the facts and admit that if at certain times we feel obliged to scrap our Christianity, it is a proof that we do not *really* believe in it at any time. The Communists accept methods of brute force, but, as they repudiate Christianity, they are at least our superiors in

## A NEW CHAPTER IN RELIGION

honesty. And in the *social order* they have gone so far beyond us in the embodiment of Christian ideas, that in spite of all their irreligious jargon their society is a more Christian one than ours.

In making a cult of intellectual honesty, is it not possible that on the theoretical side of religion the Communists may be preparing a way for something better than we have yet reached? What is uppermost in their present teaching as regards religion is the purely negative side, because there is so much intellectual and moral garbage to destroy. But that which is ugly in their teaching is, I feel, just what is ugly in Western practices, only the Communists have stripped off the aesthetic clothing in which we are accustomed to dress up ugly things. They have swept away all our sacred unrealities. To many *individuals*, of course, they are *not* 'unrealities,' but to society as a *whole* they certainly are, not only because we invariably abandon them in time of special stress and difficulty (as in time of war), but secondly because we are satisfied with a social system which is a negation of them.

When I think of the doors which are being opened to the 140 millions of Russia, doors to a new, wide world of culture and of opportunities; when I think of how these people we revile have acquired for the masses of their countrymen good and righteous things which it has taken us decades of struggle to wring at last as hard-won concessions from our

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grudging 'upper class'; of the many such things which are still far beyond our grasp while in Russia they are recognized as the birthright of every child; when I think of the uncertainty, almost the hopelessness, in our country which in the past attended and which still in many cases attends the passing of measures of the merest justice, of the simplest reason, I can feel nothing but shame, profound shame, at the self-righteous way we are continually passing judgments on the Bolsheviks.

### *THE TWOFOLD CHALLENGE OF BOLSHEVISM*

A very few weeks' observation of conditions in Russia cleared up my mind as to the impediment which class divisions based on property have imposed upon us in the exercise of Christian sympathy and understanding. We cannot really afford any longer to make Christianity difficult for ourselves in this way. The almost total blindness of masses of professing Christians where the subject of Bolshevism is concerned is just one result of the spiritual prison we have made for ourselves.

Is it not clear that unless we are doing our utmost to make them general, any advantages we enjoy as individuals serve to fence us off from others, and may therefore be a great spiritual disadvantage to us? Our property has opposed and all the time

## THE TWOFOLD CHALLENGE OF BOLSHEVISM

opposes our Christianity. Is then our property or our Christianity to come first? If the latter, it behoves us to work for that different order of society which the Communists are demonstrating to be, after all, a possible alternative, where the wealth of the Community is *not* wasted in the demoralization of individuals and in conferring on them anti-social powers. But if we do accept this as a goal, what about the *means* to the end?

The position of privilege (in our country at least) seems so strongly entrenched at the present time, that faith in the possibility of change is indeed difficult. To the Revolutionists in Russia twenty years ago faith was difficult too, and they could not have conceived that ten years would see the mighty fallen and the rich sent empty away.

In our 'Democracy' it is theoretically possible to carry out redistribution of wealth or anything else so soon as the majority of voters are convinced. But the Bolsheviks are, unfortunately, only too well justified in pointing out that where the interests of the bourgeoisie are concerned, all the underground wires are in their hands for controlling the electoral machine. Witness the almost complete bourgeois ownership of the Press, and the Press is the supreme power to-day.

To the Communist, Revolution presents itself as the only possible method of obtaining the goal: 'reforms' represent nothing better than the patching

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up of a machine which is essentially bad—doomed to the scrap-heap, and his certainty is absolute that the sooner it goes there the better. Or, to change the metaphor, the devil cannot be *converted*—he must be *destroyed*! Your apparent successes with him (in the securing of ‘reforms’) simply amount to playing into his hand—helping him to assume new and attractive disguises which will prolong his sway over you. Workers for Peace or Social Reform are thus seen in the melancholy position of busily defeating their own ends!

To the above arguments I can only reply that every reform achieved, however small in itself, represents a ‘move on’ in public thought, which in a few years’ time makes possible a further step in the same direction. Constructive forces are thereby set working which may, in the long run, achieve peacefully what Communists think only possible by Revolution.

The Communist retorts by accusing the Pacifist of being party to infinitely more violence than the Revolutionist. The use of force, he will argue, in one well-planned act of revolution averts an incomparably greater use of force. For the Capitalist Society which gives privileges to the minority at the cost of the majority is guilty of repressing and crippling life on a vast scale all the time. The casualties are innumerable. Such a Society is only kept going on a basis of force, though the force may bear as elegant a disguise as the scarlet and gold

## SOCIALISM AND PACIFISM

of a Guardsman's uniform. Moreover, the Nationalism and Imperialism of Capitalist Society continually provoke wars; and its Arms and Munition Traffic help to feed war even in the remotest parts of the world. And every war prepares the way for others in endless sequence, and any one of them may become world-wide and be infinitely more devastating than any Revolution could ever be. The Communist will further point out that a Pacifist who pays taxes or who helps in any way to keep going the political or economic machine of his country is all the time a party to the use of force; whether he does the shooting (or threatening to shoot) himself, or pays someone else to do it, makes very little difference. How many weeks would our civilization last if all instruments of force were withdrawn?

## *SOCIALISM AND PACIFISM*

There is much in the case of the Communists which seems unanswerable. In the simplest acts of daily life, from buying a postage-stamp or a tram-ticket to renting a house or keeping a Banking Account, I make myself a thread in the intricate mesh, the warp and the woof of Capitalist Society. By no isolated efforts can I possibly extricate myself. I can only reconstitute my own life by helping to reconstitute the life of Society. In the present Social

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Order the causes of war are too deeply rooted for it to be possible to eradicate them. To be effective as a Pacifist I must be a Socialist as well. But until Socialism is achieved I am enjoying wealth to which I have no moral title and helping to maintain the force which alone gives me security in it.

But why did I need a journey in the U.S.S.R. to awaken me to such facts? I think it was the psychological result of crossing a frontier which reversed the positions of a vast number of received ideas; the commonplaces and dogmas on the familiar side of the frontier had become the heresies of the land beyond; and the ideas scorned and rejected on the familiar side, on the other were found to be controlling life's daily practices.

The Society, in fact, into which one is born inevitably does most of one's thinking for one: the lines prepared are smoothed and polished and the mind slips and slides so easily along them! Our sense of individuality and of independent thinking is largely an illusion. The individual is much less of an individual than he or others think. Once we wake up to this fact, life presents to us a vast amount for revision. It is certainly painful to find that one has been a thief and murderer unawares! But what other conclusion is possible once one realizes how the individual life from the outset is caught up at every point into the larger life, economic, political, and intellectual, of the Community?

## THE PROBLEM FOR A QUAKER

But what about the *means* of escape? Belief in Revolution as the one means to the end is a more distinctive feature of Communism than the end in itself, which is not essentially different from that of ordinary Socialism.

## THE PROBLEM FOR A QUAKER

At this point the Communist will place me, as he thinks, in a dilemma. I have professed admiration for the ideals first translated into practical realities by the Communists; if I admit that already the present state of Russia marks an incomparable advance on the Tsarist régime, can I say that I *regret* the Communist Revolution? If I do *not* regret it, then my position as a Pacifist appears to be that I approve of other people doing what I would not do myself!

I may point out to my Communist disputants (and what tremendous disputants they are!) that at best Revolution is a most risky experiment, and that in Russia the circumstances which procured success were very special and not likely to find a parallel elsewhere, least of all in England. But such arguments are not relevant to my case as a Pacifist. Firstly, then, I point out that long years of devoted work and self-sacrifice have borne fruit in the Communist success; without them the rifles would

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have achieved little. Were the rifles, in fact, indispensable? To the Communist it is childish to conceive of anything else. But I myself do find it possible to believe that even a small number of people, *if* they brought *equal devotion* to the same idealist ends (which means taking life in hand and sparing no sacrifice or trouble), *could* effect more for them in the long run. To have acquired this belief lays upon one a great responsibility for personal action, but it does not diminish one's sympathy and admiration for those who have not acquired it; and where force is in any case pitted against force one can but rejoice in victory for the more enlightened side. If there had been no Revolution in Russia, would force be enthroned there to any less degree to-day? I believe it would be far more universally, pitilessly, and unreasonably in action than it is now.

But I repeat my conviction: if we in the West were to a comparable degree convinced of the rightness of the end we *could* find a better means.

For me the best proof of the power of thought lies in the ever-renewed turmoil in the soul of the world resultant on three years' activity on the part of one Individual; and on a lesser scale the achievements of many of His followers. But to the Communist the name of Christ is too discredited for it to be of any use talking about Him. The name bears no relation

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in his mind to any historical person; it stands for the figurehead of a Church which was really one arm of a tyrannical State; a name, moreover, interwoven with a mass of superstition. With a pitying smile my Communist will tell me that many Tolstoymen used to talk like that. When the crisis came some of them took up arms, and the rest—what have they ever achieved?

Whatever one may say in answer to this, the Communist will almost certainly see in one's position the moral and intellectual weakness of a bourgeois who cannot face the final logic of facts—not even of the facts already admitted, and whose courage will always fail at the last fence, if not long before! To him the supreme demonstration of the truth of his creed, and of the fatuity of every one else's, is the living reality of the U.S.S.R. The simple mind is convinced, the simple soul is inspired, and gladly takes his place in the missionary army. In the language of the religion he has discarded, he sees a Way of Salvation for the peoples of all the world. Capitalism is the Devil, and by Revolution, and only by Revolution, he *can* be destroyed. This Devil bears the great merit of simplicity! But for me he continues to present a more complex character than that, and I believe that every use of violence gives him a new lease of life.

# THE CHALLENGE OF BOLSHEVISM

## *THE SUPERSEDING OF INDIVIDUALISM*

My convictions as a Pacifist in fact remain, but they are based on something which I must admit I cannot prove: on a belief in the forces of thought; forces incidental to all action, and in the case of physical force likely to render it subversive in the long run of the ends proposed; forces which, if released by love unaccompanied by hate, and used scientifically, might revolutionize Society more quickly than any of us can imagine. But the fact is that the effectiveness of such powers for the organized life of Society (as distinct from the life of the individual) still awaits the demonstration which will carry any widespread conviction. The demonstration can only come when not only the ideal in view but the methods to be employed can command among a far wider circle than they do now faith and devotion equal to the Communists' own.

In Russia the forces of love and of hate on a large scale are to be seen working side by side. But under the Communists' control of things good will towards the vast majority seems to me to have a more transforming influence on the life of the country as a whole, and to be a far more important factor than the ill will shown to the minority.

## THE SUPERSEDING OF INDIVIDUALISM

The Revolutionist who takes his life and his all in his hand—and there have been an unnumbered host of them in Russia—*may* be on a higher plane, and *may* bring more genuine idealism to his task, than the Pacifist who finds the act of killing and maiming intolerable, but who accepts a relatively comfortable life under the régime which endows him with wealth at the expense of others, and who allows the Force, which he professes to abjure, to protect him in the possession of it.

Enlightenment on these matters constitutes a call which is irresistible. Passivity becomes complicity. If the Communist is not to put the Christian to shame, no sacrifice short of complete devotion of life and of wealth can avail.



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